



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
JIM MCINTIRE
46TH DISTRICT



LEGISLATIVE REPORT TO THE 46TH DISTRICT

Spring 2006

Dear Friends:

For the first time in state history, this is the second year in a row that we adjourn early. It's been a very productive biennium and I'm pleased that Republicans and Democrats worked together these two years to pass groundbreaking legislation for the people of Washington.

We made real progress this biennium: a transportation budget and financing package that was upheld by voters last November, education reforms to help students succeed, increased access to higher education, health care coverage for thousands of children, environmental breakthroughs for water and alternative energy, economic development, unemployment insurance reforms, election reforms, equal rights for every single Washingtonian, and a supplemental budget that saves almost \$1 billion dollars for upcoming costs next year.

And while we put money in the bank, we also preserved and strengthened critical programs and services for those in greatest need.

I'm proud to share this legislative report with you. Please contact me with your comments and ideas. I'm here to serve you and I value your input.

Sincerely,

Jim McIntire
State Representative
46th Legislative District

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:

- Finance, *Chair*
- Economic & Revenue
Forecast Council, *Chair*
- Legislative Evaluation and
Accountability Program
Committee (LEAP), *Chair*
- Appropriations, *Member*

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KIDS: OUR FIRST PRIORITY

The results we produced this biennium reflect House Democrats' commitment to Washington's youngest citizens.

Last session we wrote an operating budget that included funding for voter approved education initiatives. We established an Education Legacy Trust Account to fully fund I-728, lower class sizes, and I-732, cost of living increase for teachers (1.2% increase the first year and 1.7% the second). These initiatives have made a difference in the classroom and help our teachers stay in the profession that they love.

And this year, our supplemental budget provides:

- \$38 million for an additional 11,690 students enrolled in our public schools;
- \$34 million for a cost of living increase for K-12 teachers as required by Initiative 732, plus \$15 million to help make up for previous underfunding.
- \$32 million for learning assistance and math remediation to help students meet graduation requirements.

MORE JOBS: A HEALTHIER ECONOMY

Our economy is coming back strong, and we want to keep it that way. This biennium we passed legislation that invests in our businesses, our infrastructure, and most important, our people:

JOB DEVELOPMENT FUND:

provides grants to cities, towns and other government entities for projects that create local jobs, stimulate economic development, and promote community growth.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC ACCOUNT:

recruits businesses to the state and encourages existing businesses to expand. Funds from the account can be used for workforce training programs, needed public infrastructure or other initiatives that benefit local businesses.

PUBLIC WORKS TRUST FUND LOAN PROGRAM: 6,000 new construction jobs and more than \$620 million dollars in economic activity will be generated as a result of low or no-interest loans to communities for bridges, roads, domestic water, sanitary sewer, storm sewer, and solid waste projects.

LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCING TOOL: LIFT is a new economic development tool for cities and counties to promote job creation and revitalize urban areas. It allows local governments to build infrastructure, such as water lines and roads, by issuing bonds based on future tax revenue.

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

Small communities lack the necessary funds to promote job creation, so we gave them a hand with a competitive grant program to develop strategies for local economies.



TARGETED INVESTMENTS IN KEY INDUSTRIES: We encouraged job creation and retention throughout the state, with tax incentives and credits:

- Incited expansion of the semiconductor manufacturing industry
- Helped aluminum manufacturing while power costs are high
- Broadened aerospace incentives to include more small businesses
- Extended similar incentives to the timber and forest products industry
- Bolstered biotechnology and medical device manufacturing
- Encouraged the motion picture industry
- Invested in environmental remediation and toxic cleanups

PERFORMANCE AUDITS: ARE WE GETTING OUR MONEY'S WORTH?

There are over 500 tax preferences in Washington law – many have existed since the 1930's and have never been subject to a review. Citizens have every right to know if the tax breaks in our books are really creating and maintaining jobs. I've pushed for accountability on this issue since 2003.

My performance audits bill finally passed the legislature this year. By reviewing tax preferences, we will be able to improve the performance, effectiveness, and credibility of our tax code – creating more jobs and revenue.

HERE'S WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES:

- requires periodic performance audits of all tax preferences, including exemptions, exclusions, deductions, credits, deferrals, and preferential rates;
- creates a Citizen Commission to review all tax exemptions at least once every ten years (the State Auditor is a member); and
- requires the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee to conduct the actual audits of tax preferences. The Citizen Commission will use these studies to make recommendations to the Legislature.

These audits are meant to serve public interest; we want to make sure Washington citizens know that their tax dollars are well invested.

TRANSPORTATION: MOVING PEOPLE SAFELY AND EFFICIENTLY

I was very pleased to get funding for the much needed noise wall on I-5 from 5th Ave NE to 92nd NE included in the 2005 Transportation Budget. The noise level on this section of the freeway is ever constant, and as the amount of traffic increases, so does the volume. Construction is scheduled to begin December 2007.

But we have numerous transportation problems in the state that can't be fixed by building a wall. As more people make Washington their home, the need to reinforce our infrastructure only grows bigger. Bridges and highways across our state are at risk of failure. Repairing them is not a question of if, and the when is as soon as possible. So last year we decided to quit putting off these improvements by passing legislation to get people moving safely and efficiently.



Last November voters upheld the gas tax increase that will help fund several mega-projects in the central Puget Sound region. The next step will require three counties, King, Pierce and Snohomish, to raise the rest of the revenue needed to finish those critical projects.

One of the transportation highlights of this session was an amendment to the Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID) bill that we hope will enable us to finish work on the 520 floating bridge, Interstate 405 and the Viaduct. The Governor and the Legislature will receive a report on project finance and implementation plans by September 1, 2006. A vote on a RTID funding package will occur simultaneously with Sound Transit Phase 2 on the November 2007 ballot.

EQUAL RIGHTS FOR EVERYONE: A PREJUDICE-FREE WASHINGTON

Every year, for almost three decades, House Democrats have sponsored legislation to ban all forms of discrimination in Washington. Known as the Anti-Discrimination bill, its purpose is to make it illegal to discriminate against anyone based on sexual orientation.

Last year, after passing the House four times since 1994 only to die in the Senate, the anti-discrimination bill actually made it to the Senate floor but was one vote short.

This session however, the tireless efforts of civil rights groups and dedicated legislators finally paid off: the measure passed the legislature and was quickly thereafter signed by Governor Gregoire.





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ELECTION REFORMS: A MORE RELIABLE PROCESS

The elections held in November 2004 raised questions about the efficiency and accuracy of our system, so last year we passed a package of election reform bills that make significant improvements to our electoral process. Voters, citizens' groups, and election officials from all over the state were all involved in drafting the legislation. Some of these reforms are:

MAIL BALLOTS: Helps counties in the state to convert to all mail elections. Currently five Washington counties vote entirely by mail (Skamania, Clallam, Pend Oreille, Okanogan, and Ferry County) and 69% of the state votes by permanent absentee ballot.

PROVISIONAL BALLOTS: Regulates the handling and security of provisional ballots and requires auditors to notify a voter within three days if the signature does not match.

SIGNATURE VERIFICATION: Creates a new set of guidelines on how to verify a voter's signature. When voting at the poll you'll need identification before signing the book. It can be a photo ID such as a driver's license or state identification card, student identification card, or tribal identification card; a voter ID, or a current utility

bill, bank statement, paycheck, or government check or other government document. If a person cannot provide identification as required by this section, he or she will be issued a provisional ballot.

STATE-WIDE VOTER DATABASE: Requires the Secretary of State to quarterly review, update and correct the voter registration list.

PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP: The voter registration form clearly states the applicant must be a U.S. citizen. It includes a warning that it is a Class C felony to provide false information.

MILITARY VOTERS: Return envelope for mail ballots must have a box the voter can check to indicate a member of the armed forces or an overseas voter.

And this session we went one step further by moving the primary elections date. Washington's primary elections in September are the latest in the country. Some states hold primaries as early as March. **Next year, our primary will be moved back from September to the third Tuesday in August.** Close elections, recounts, and slow absentee ballot returns have been a major concern to election officials who need more time to prepare the November ballot. This change provides a more realistic time to assure proper and accurate ballot counts.



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